



Dr. Thomas M. Kennedy, MD  
Primary Care Center at Connecticut Children's Medical Center  
76 New Britain Ave, CT 06106  
(860) 837-6800



Testimony of Thomas Kennedy of the Primary Care Center at Connecticut Children's Medical Center  
**IN SUPPORT OF SB 209,**  
AN ACT CONCERNING FUNDING FOR THE REACH OUT AND READ PROGRAM  
Before the Connecticut General Assembly's Committee on Children  
February 5, 2015

Good afternoon, Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Urban and members of the Committee on Children,

I am a Pediatric resident at Connecticut Children's Medical Center. I am writing you in my role as a physician and advocate for children to lend my support to **Senate Bill 209, An Act Concerning Funding for the Reach Out and Read Program.**

Low literacy is a major health problem that we have the power to address. The best strategy to do so is providing children and their parents with the tools and encouragement they need to succeed. Reach Out and Read is a national program to promote literacy by giving physicians like myself an evidence-based strategy to promote child development and learning. The program is extremely economical, requiring very little infrastructure, providing books purchased at a discounted rate and relying on Pediatricians as highly trained volunteers to implement it in their practices. There is rarely a visit in my own clinic when a mother and father are not genuinely thankful for the books we provide, books they otherwise would not have to teach and bond with their own children.

The Reach Out and Read model is a scientifically validated model to promote literacy skills beginning at the early age of 6 months. Fifteen peer-reviewed research studies demonstrate important positive outcomes when families receive books and guidance through this program. These studies have been carried out in at least 10 different states, including our state of Connecticut, with bilingual families and non-English speaking families. The results are always the same: Reach Out and Read families are significantly more likely to read to their children and to have more children's books in their homes. Importantly, research has shown that children serviced by this wonderful program have an increase of 4-8 points on vocabulary tests by the age of 2. This increase represents a 6 month gain developmentally and thereby helps prevent the deficits in school readiness skills often observed in children living in low-income families.

No child should grow up without their parent being able to read to them. It is our ethical obligation as those in a position to make a difference to provide those whom cannot provide for themselves with something as simple as a book and the encouragement needed. While it seems simple, it truly has the potential to make a life-changing difference for countless in our state. **Please support Senate Bill 209, An Act Concerning Funding for the Reach Out and Read Program.** The children of Connecticut deserve nothing less.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Thomas M. Kennedy, MD